

### Jacques Maritain and John Dewey on Education: A Reconsideration

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**J**acques Maritain and John Dewey were two of the towering figures in philosophy of education. Maritain led an international revival of Aristotelian and Thomist philosophies known as Integral Humanism. Dewey, a founding figure of Pragmatism, exercised a significant influence on American education. Originating in very different philosophical settings, their ideas on education tend to represent polar opposites. An analysis of the divergent insights on education presented by Maritain and Dewey can help educators step back and reflect on their work. These two thinkers' voices have a relevance that continues to speak to us about the problems of education.

#### **Philosophical and Theoretical Orientation**

To discuss Maritain and Dewey on education, we consider the origin of their ideas in different philosophical and theoretical contexts. Maritain's concepts of universal truth and purposeful human life originate in the Aristotelian and Thomist traditions, especially their metaphysics. Maritain espouses Aristotle's metaphysics, which sees objective reality as operating according to universal natural laws. He endorses Aristotle's epistemology that human beings have the potentiality to acquire knowledge about this reality by forming concepts through a twofold process of sensation and abstraction. Aristotle's view of knowledge and knowing differs from Plato's theory of reminiscence, in which ideas existing latently in the mind are brought to consciousness. True to his Aristotelian origin, Maritain consistently argues that human beings' powers of intellect endow them with the potential of rationality. Although Maritain's philosophy of education rests on Aristotle's metaphysics, Dewey rejects metaphysics as purely speculative and empirically unverifiable. Contemporary postmodern critics, too, would challenge Maritain's reliance on metaphysics as a historically generated construc-

tion that claimed universal truth for what was really the rationale of one group to dominate another.

Maritain's commitment to theology and religion constitutes a second pillar in his educational philosophy. Maritain espouses the philosophy and theology of Thomas Aquinas, the medieval theologian. In a grand synthesis of Aristotle's realism and Christian doctrine, Aquinas defines the human as an intelligent being, possessing a material body and a spiritual soul, created by an omniscient and loving God. Extending Aristotle's view of human happiness into eternity, Aquinas defines the purpose of human existence as the complete happiness that comes with being in the presence of God in heaven. Maritain finds education that lacks a religious orientation to be incomplete: it not only omits a necessary element in Western culture but is without the guidance of an ultimate purpose.<sup>1</sup>

In 1943, when Maritain's *Education at the Crossroads* argued for including religion in education, his contention was compatible with Roman Catholicism. Although it appeared incompatible with the principle of separation of church and state that governed American public education, Maritain's secular compatriots Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler believed Thomist principles could be adapted to nonreligious educational institutions. Dewey regarded the arguments of Maritain, Hutchins, and Adler as a retreat into medieval scholasticism that substituted alleged metaphysical and theological "truth" for scientific thinking.

It might be asked if Maritain's religious emphasis fits the contemporary resurgence of faith-based values that American society is experiencing in the twenty-first century. The answer seems to be both yes and no. Maritain would oppose an exclusively secular value orientation in public schools and argue that religion, especially the history of religion in Western culture, should be a part of public education. However, he would be unlikely to endorse religious sectarianism in education that is not based on theology conjoined with rationalism.

A perennialist in educational theory, Maritain can be grouped with Hutchins and Adler, whom he quotes approvingly in *Education at the Crossroads*, and with contemporary theorists such as William Bennett and Allan Bloom.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on Aristotle and Aquinas, perennialists assert that education, like the truth on which it rests, is universal and authentic at every period of history. Neither truth nor education is relative to time, place, or circumstances, nor is it the result of opinion polls, samples, surveys, and focus groups. Perennialist educational theory asserts that human beings, by their very nature, possess a potentiality to know and an inclination to find the truth. This potentiality is enhanced when the individual is brought into contact with the collective experience of the human race through the transmission of the cultural heritage.

Perennialists assert that education's primary purpose is to bring each generation in contact with truth by exercising and cultivating the intelligence and rationality each person possesses. All lesser goals must conform to that purpose. Truth exists; it is portrayed in the classic, enduring works of art, literature, philosophy, science, and history each generation creates. Like Hutchins and Adler, Maritain endorses the educational importance of the "Great Books," but with qualifications. For him, the goal is to discover and enjoy the truth and beauty they convey rather than to master their contents. Reading and discussion of the Great Books should be accompanied by courses that establish their historical context and explore their subject matter. Discussions of the Great Books should penetrate to their core as great achievements of the human mind rather than to erudition or memorization. Without knowing these achievements, Maritain contends, it is impossible to understand the development of civilization, culture, and science.<sup>3</sup>

John Dewey comes from a very different philosophical orientation. With Charles S. Peirce, William James, and George H. Mead, Dewey constructed Pragmatism, developing his own Instrumentalist or Experimentalist version. Rejecting metaphysics, pragmatists redefine philosophy's function as examining the contexts and processes in which human beings sustain and advance life by solving their problems. Discounting claims that truth is constant and universal, pragmatists see



those claims as tentative, unwarranted assertions, valid at a particular time but subject to ongoing verification and reconstruction. To validate an idea means to act on it to determine if the consequences of action resolve a particular problem. Pragmatism seeks to create an openness to change and to develop a means of directing its course.

For Dewey, Maritain's reliance on *a priori* first principles represents a closed rather than an open universe. It is a dogmatic obstacle rather than an aid to genuine inquiry because it refuses to test the principles upon which it rests. These first principles put thought in an intellectual box that closes the mind to alternative possibilities. In contrast, Dewey contends that ideas are validated instrumentally and not by their conformity to external dogmas and antecedent first principles. A contextual or situational theorist, Dewey emphasizes that human problems take place in a particular place at a particular time. Successful problem solving, based on the scientific method, builds a fund of knowledge based on tested experience. It constructs a stock of warranted assertions, or tentative truth claims, which can be used to solve present and future problems.

Dewey would strongly object to Maritain's reliance on dualist and hierarchical principles. Maritain's educational philosophy is replete with dualisms derived from Aristotle's distinctions between form and matter and abstraction and sensation, and Aquinas's distinctions between soul and body. Though Maritain claims the elements in these dualisms are complementary, they lead to the concept of hierarchy—that one dimension is ranked higher than the other because it is more related to intelligibility and rationality, the human's defining potentiality. Not all things are equal; some are better in the sense that they are more enduring, universal, and abstract than others. Human activities, too, can be arranged in a hierarchy with the more general, abstract, and theoretical ranked higher than those that are specific and applied in particular situations. The hierarchical principle has meaning for organizing knowledge areas in the curriculum. Theoretical and abstract subjects have a higher ranking and a greater educational priority over those that are practical and applied. For example, philosophy and theology rank highest since they are the most intellectual subjects and the best guides to truth. The liberal arts and sciences that provide general education have priority over specialized, technological, and vocational training.

Dewey makes a concerted attack on dualism in philosophy and in education. For him, dualism stems from the attempt, originating in metaphysics and theology, to create two realms—a certain one of unchanging perfection and the other uncertain and imperfect.<sup>4</sup> With Plato, human beings, wanting certainty but living in an uncertain world, began their long intellectual retreat into a realm where everything is certain because

it never changes. Maritain continued that quest for certainty. Rejecting dualistic philosophies, Dewey proposed a theory of knowledge based on the continuum of human experience that relates rather than separates thinking and acting, fact and value, and intellect and emotion. For Dewey, philosophical dualism weakens the integrity of education by falsely dividing it into two dimensions—one abstract and theoretical and the other applied and practical. Maritain and other perennialist educators perpetuate these divisions by elevating what they regard as the intellectual over the practical.

Dewey argues that human experience is of a piece, an ongoing, cumulative flow in which artificial barriers between theory and practice are integrated into a singular method of intelligence, the scientific-like ability to solve problems. He argues that absolute certainty is impossible in a constantly changing world. Although we cannot have certainty, Dewey argues, we can use a method of intelligence that provides a possibility of directing change in an uncertain world. Many of Dewey's efforts in philosophy and education are directed to correcting what he regards as the erroneous and archaic dualism that separated the mind from the body and theory from practice, which he sought to reunite in his concept of experience.

Dewey is associated with Progressivism in education and liberalism in politics. For him, a democratic society is most conducive to applying the scientific method and to creating a truly sharing democratic community. His choice of a title, *Democracy and Education*, for his most complete philosophy of education reveals that emphasis.<sup>5</sup> Democracy is free of dogmas and absolutes that block experimental inquiry. No subject, custom, or value is so sacrosanct that it escapes questioning and inquiry. Further, the society is to be free of coercive and authoritarian persons who jeopardize freedom of thought, inquiry, and experimentation.

Maritain regarded Dewey's instrumentalist philosophy as a devitalizing force in American education. In the conclusion of *Education at the Crossroads*, Maritain wrote that American education finds itself at the crossroads: it needs to liberate itself from pragmatist philosophy, which hinders true inspiration and the search for truth, and replace it with the profoundly personalist Integral Humanism.<sup>6</sup> Dewey, in turn, strongly disagreed with Maritain, whom he believed was presenting medieval scholastic absolutes in more modern form. Based on these two perspectives, we can consider and compare certain aspects of Maritain and Dewey.

## Human Nature

Maritain's concept of human nature rests on what he refers to as the "philosophical-religious," the Greek, Jewish, and Christian idea of the

human being. The person is "endowed with reason, whose supreme dignity is in the intellect" and "a free individual in personal relation with God, whose supreme righteousness consists in voluntarily obeying the law of God." A "sinful and wounded creature," the person is "called to divine life and to the freedom of grace, whose supreme perfection consists of love."<sup>7</sup> Maritain embraces a universal concept of human nature based on natural-law principles. The moral principles and values that emerge from a reasoned consideration of the human person transcend differences of time, place, and circumstance. The religious aspect complements, adds to, and illuminates what we know through reason. Inhabiting a purposeful universe, human beings, too, have a purpose, a destiny, which gives direction to their lives. Possessing truth and exercising freedom mean identifying with that purpose and using it to guide all goals and actions. In education, Maritain attacks Pragmatism's scientific view, which reduces human existence to the empirically observable and verifiable. Merging the observable and the measurable, the scientific view arrogantly dismisses the human being's defining essence.

For Dewey, the naturalistic concepts of organism and environment are most significant in formulating an experimentalist epistemology and an educational theory based on it. Somewhat similar to other simpler organisms, the human being is composed physiologically of living tissue and possesses life-sustaining drives and impulses. The human organism possesses a highly developed brain, making it a reflective creature that can hypothetically conjecture the consequences of projected action and create plans to enhance life. Further, the human, with its thumb and movable forefinger, is an instrument maker and user. Every organism, including the human one, lives in an environment containing conditions that both support and threaten life. For Dewey, life is a series of connected and related interactive episodes or transactions between the human organism and its environment.

Basing his thought on a naturalistic rather than metaphysical view of the human being, Dewey is again at odds with Maritain. Dewey rejects Maritain's assumption that there is a general purpose in human life and that all other goals and activities should conform to that generalized purpose. He would find Maritain's emphasis on a universal purpose so remote from immediate concerns that it provides no practical direction to the problems arising in experience. Further, there are no possibilities of putting it into action and testing it; hence, it leads to a dangerous separation between ends and means. For Dewey, a genuine aim in education is an end-in-view that includes a conjecture of how the aim is to be achieved when the person acts on it. A person develops an aim from involvement in a specific situation, especially one in which an obstacle is faced. It originates as an idea, a plan, and a hypothesis on how to

resolve and surmount the obstacle. As a hypothesis, the idea requires testing—acting on it to see if it actually solves the problem. The aim and the end are thus united by a series of steps.

On the principle that the rightness of immediate aims depends on conformity with the general purpose of human life, Maritain attacks Dewey's concept of aims as ends-in-view for exaggerating means to the disregard of ends. This exaggeration of means multiplies them endlessly and needlessly. In contrast, Maritain sees education as possessing aims that lead to a unifying and determinate end. For Maritain, education has the paramount aim of guiding individuals to shape themselves as human persons "armed with knowledge, strength of judgment, and moral virtues" and conveying to them "the spiritual heritage of their nation and civilization" in order to preserve and extend into the future the great achievements of human intellect.<sup>8</sup> The general development of human intellectual potentialities is the best way to deal with problems that may arise in life.

### The Learner

Closely related to the conception of human nature and of particular importance for educators is the philosophers' outlook on the learner. Maritain sees early childhood as the period of the "preconscious mind," a time of living in a world of imagination, where the first insights into knowledge come as stories. Children, he believes, are inclined to see events as magical. Early education commences the process of civilizing the child's mind by beginning a transition from the imagined to the reasoned as the child works to formulate ideas about the external world. The teacher's role is to awaken the child's creative imagination, a vital sign of the intellect, and to lead the child into a system of rational knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Through the appeal of beautiful ideas, objects, and deeds, children are awakened to intellectual and moral life. Rejecting Rousseau's view of the child as naturally good at birth, Maritain warns that children's immature instincts and the violence of nature and society can cause feelings of intense resentment, wickedness, and manifold perversion if not properly channeled. In Maritain's beliefs about childhood, the theology that the human being is wounded by sin but redeemable by grace operates. Dewey would reject the concepts of a fallen human nature and redemption by grace as unverifiable residues from the medieval world-view.

Childhood and adolescence, for Maritain, are transitional stages to the adult world; the potential for intellectual judgment is present, still developing, but not yet acquired. This transition is stimulated by the child's natural tendency to desire intelligence and by a growing acquaintance with the human intellectual heritage, especially the bodies of knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences. In the Aristotelian-Thomist



epistemology that Maritain follows, the knower first seeks to discover what an object is and then what it does. That implies a searching for and a grasping for existing and discoverable truth. It is important to note Maritain would reject constructivist learning theory in which children construct or create their reality. For him, the child does not construct the truth but discovers it. Maritain advises teachers that their role is to lead students to the subjects that provide knowledge and then guide them through these fields of knowledge. The primary goal of teaching is to develop in the learner a grasp of the meaning and truth rather than the acquisition of the science or art itself. The meaning of a science or art is contained in the specific truth or beauty it offers.

Dewey offers a very different view of children and of their education. Children, like all people, are involved in interactions with their world, their social and physical environments. Through these interactions with the things and the people in the environment, they develop intelligence, defined instrumentally and socially as the ability to solve problems.

Dewey sees children as naturally inclined to the scientific method: like the scientist they are curious in their desire to know and enjoy testing objects they encounter to see how they work. To satisfy their curiosity, children are constantly alert and relentlessly active in exploring their environment and testing its contents. It is crucial that teachers use children's natural curiosity and interests and not stifle them with what is extraneous to children's experience. Teachers are to create rich learning environments by providing those objects—the materials or “realia”—that engage curiosity and stimulate exploration. Learning becomes increasingly more social as children learn that they can consult with other people—children, adults, and teachers—in their environmental explorations. Children's questions of “What is that?” and “Why does it do that?” and “What is its name?” signify their entry into intelligence's social relationships. Curiosity grows more intellectual when it is transformed into interest in problems caused by interaction with objects and people in the environment. Dewey advises teachers to encourage children's open-minded curiosity and warns against stifling it by routine and dogmatism.<sup>10</sup> He would likely find Maritain's concepts of the learner based on a *a priori* philosophical and theological dogmas rather than a truly empirically based psychology of learning.

Dewey sees children's growth as a series of related and cumulative stages that naturally flow into one another. He advises teachers to use methods consistent with this natural flow rather than interfere or interject extraneous subjects foreign to children's interests during each stage of development. Growth, like experience, is ongoing; each stage has its own logic and psychology that prepares for the next stage. The logical and the psychological are not opposed to, or even independent of, each



other, but are connected at the earlier and later stages in one continuous process of growth.

Maritain would likely fault Dewey's concept of growth and following the child's interests as depriving the learning process of the guidance and direction that mature and educated teachers can offer. Although Maritain would not object to cultivating children's interests, he would advise teachers to channel and to guide these interests to truth. Maritain believed that the world human beings live in is purposeful. To rely on an ill-defined concept of growth for the sake of further growth, as Dewey recommends, denies the human purpose of reaching an ultimate end.

## **Method**

Maritain and Dewey's philosophical differences extend to their views on methods of instruction. For Maritain, the goal of education is to perfect the human intellectual power to grasp and understand truth. That power is cultivated through intellectual subjects in which thought is organized into bodies of knowledge. Maritain's emphasis on content rather than method of instruction reflects his commitment to metaphysics as the highest kind of knowledge. Dewey, in sharp contrast, emphasizes method over content. Rejecting metaphysics but stressing epistemology, Dewey regards the method of thinking intelligently as the ability to think through and resolve problems. Contrary to Maritain's view of subjects as having their own intrinsic values, Dewey sees content as a resource, an instrument, to use in solving problems.

Educational method, influenced by Dewey's pragmatism, emphasizes an experience-based or process-oriented curriculum. Problem solving begins when the individual meets an obstacle or impediment to ongoing activity. Thinking involves doing what is necessary to solve the problem. Dewey designed a series of problem-solving steps, "the complete act of thought," that replicate the scientific method. His experimental process-oriented method consists of the following phases:

1. The person encounters a new experience that blocks ongoing activity. Because of the new element, or "deviant particular," the individual, or the group, is in a problematic situation. In the encounter with the novel, there is a necessary sense of uncertainty, perplexity, hesitation, and doubt.
2. To solve the problem, it needs to be located and defined. Once the cause of the problem is identified and defined, the individual or group can move to solve it. The need to solve the problem, an end-in-view, guides the process.

3. After the problem has been located and defined, it is possible to gather information, do research, and consult previous experience that sheds light on the problem and points to its solution. In this stage, the teacher functions as a resource person who facilitates students' research.
4. Now comes the stage in which tentative hypotheses of possible action are conjectured. The person or group reflects upon the possible action to be taken and mentally explores its consequences. The question to be answered is "If I do this, what is likely to result?" In education, the goal is to develop reflective attitudes that contribute to planning skills. Such plans, the ends-in-view, direct experience.
5. The last stage involves acting on the tentative hypothesis deemed most likely to resolve the problem by bringing about the desired consequences. If the problem is solved, the procedures of the complete act of thought have been followed correctly. If it is not resolved, the process needs reexamination to identify mistakes that may have interfered with its solution. If the problem is solved, the person resumes activity and adds the particular problem-solving episode to his or her network of experience. In the educational situation, the final step of the problem-solving sequence is of crucial importance. Unlike many conventional school situations where problem solving remains strictly academic, Dewey's process requires action, an empirical test. This stage avoids the dualism of theory and practice and integrates them into complete thinking.<sup>11</sup>

Dewey's problem-oriented thinking can be contrasted with Maritain's emphasis on guiding first principles from philosophy and theology. Dewey relies on uncertainty to provoke thought while Maritain relies on certainty to promote the exercise of intelligence. Problem-based thinking, for Dewey, is the basis of reflective judgment. It is characterized by an openness to accept uncertainty and suspend judgment while further inquiry and research takes place. Conclusions are withheld until corroborated or refuted by evidence.

For Dewey, problem solving according to the scientific method is the proper way to think and also the most effective strategy for teaching and learning. Life and learning involve a series of experiments by which human beings seek to control and direct their interactions with their environment. This process is an active, ongoing, cumulative flow of

human experience that unites the episodes of the past with the present to give direction and control over the future.

Maritain, in contrast, regards Dewey's pragmatic rendition of thought as an erroneous disregard of contemplation and self-perfection. For him, Dewey seriously errs in defining human thought as a response to environmental situations. Rather, thinking begins not only with problems but also with insights. At the beginning of human action, there is truth to be grasped for its own sake. Pragmatism produces skepticism and abandons the very idea of truth.<sup>12</sup>

## Teaching

In analyzing teaching and learning, Maritain, a philosophical Realist, sees the teaching-learning relationship as a triad that involves (1) a subject, a body of knowledge—that is, the object of instruction; (2) a learner who seeks to acquire that knowledge; and (3) a teacher who aids the student in that acquisition. Instruction involves bringing something that is outside, or objective, to the learner's mind. The learner, possessing the intellectual power, is the primary agent in the educational act. The teacher plays a secondary role in learning, encouraging the learners' intellectual dispositions. In liberating these good energies, the inclination to truth, the teacher encourages the learners by making them aware of their own resources and potentialities. The teacher must, from the beginning, respect the learner's personality and appeal to the learner's powers of understanding. The teacher possesses a body of knowledge that the learner lacks but needs to gain. As a minister of learning, the teacher devises instructional strategies based on what the learner already knows that leads to acquiring the new knowledge.

Dewey, consistent with his instrumentalist philosophy, construes the teacher as a resource guide in the learner's problem solving. The teacher's subject matter is the learner. Teachers need knowledge of the student's individual traits and habits. They need to study the conditions that modify for better or worse the directions in which individual powers habitually express themselves. The teacher needs to study both individual mental operations and the effects of school conditions upon those operations. Everything the teacher does, as well as the way in which she or he does it, stimulates the child's response in some way.

## The Group

There are significant differences in the emphasis that Maritain and Dewey place on education's social aspects. While Maritain recognizes the need to prepare individuals to play their part in the human group, education's ultimate aim is not based on social relationships but directed to the person's intellectual and spiritual search for truth. Dewey, in

sharp contrast, gives much more importance to participation in the human group. Human intelligence is socially constructed as people interact with one another in solving problems in their environment. Society embraces all the sociocultural institutions and processes that the human race has constructed over time. The human group possesses the possibilities for developing and enriching shared intelligence. Education is a means of developing a sense of shared community.

For Dewey, people construct a genuine community through three stages: common sharing, communication, and community itself. In the first stage, the group's sharing of common objects and pursuit of common activities creates a sense of social identification and membership. As the group's members share common instruments to attain common goals, they communicate about their common endeavors. Communication thus develops from a commonly shared context and space that form the basis of community. For Dewey, there is a communal, or communitarian, core of beliefs and values that rest on commonly agreed-to and shared democratic procedures. Dewey's emphasis on group learning was revealed in his early work at the University of Chicago Laboratory School, which he called a "miniature society" and "an embryonic community."<sup>13</sup> Collaborative group learning brings individuals into group membership. By working on common projects, the group's members develop an enriched social intelligence.

## Curriculum

Maritain and Dewey also have different perspectives on curricular content and organization. Maritain's curriculum is organized into subjects that represent areas of organized knowledge. In contrast, Dewey's curriculum emphasizes experience, activities, and problem solving.

Maritain designates three major periods of education: (1) rudimentary or elementary education; (2) the humanities studied in secondary and college education; and (3) advanced graduate studies and specialized education. These periods, he contends, correspond to the stages of chronological and psychological development and to the organization of knowledge. Rudimentary pre-liberal arts elementary education, a period of seven years, should develop intellectual skills and exercise the logic needed for reason. It is subdivided into four years of initial elementary education, from ages six to nine, and three years of complementary elementary education for ages ten through twelve. Maritain's tendency to base curriculum on subjects rather than activities begins in early education and continues through its completion. The key subjects of the elementary period are grammar, logic, and the vernacular and foreign languages; national and cultural history, taught in reference to geography; and natural science, with emphasis on elementary astronomy and

geology. Maritain's proposed elementary curriculum emphasizes discrete subjects rather than the progressive tendency to organize them into integrated areas such as language arts, social studies, and life and earth sciences. There is no suggestion of social promotion: academic progress signifies that a student has mastered the subject and is well prepared to begin the next higher stage.

Dewey-inspired critics of Maritain would likely fault his neglect of children's socialization and physical and emotional development in the curriculum. They would also find his strong belief in academic preparation a constraint on other kinds of curriculum organization, such as process-oriented, constructionist, and collaborative learning.

Secondary and undergraduate college education, for Maritain, focuses on the liberal arts and sciences, which contain humankind's liberating achievements of mind and which exercise logical and rational thinking. Secondary education, following a European three-year pattern, is intensely content oriented and subject matter based; it consists of national and foreign languages, comparative grammar and philology, the art of written and verbal expression, national history, the history of civilization and science, geography, and natural sciences, especially geology and botany. Again, critics would be likely to find it inadequate in terms of providing for socialization and recreation and for an introduction to vocational subjects and skills.

After constructing the scaffolding for elementary and secondary education, Maritain proceeds to the collegiate undergraduate curriculum. Building on the arts and science foundation established in secondary school, the undergraduate four-year curriculum includes mathematics, literature, poetry, logic, foreign languages, the history of civilization, physics and natural science, fine arts, the history of science, and psychology. As can be expected there is an emphasis on philosophy, which includes metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of nature, ethics, and political and social philosophy.

At the summit of Maritain's curricular hierarchy is the university, a place of universal knowledge devoted to advanced and graduate studies. The more general, abstract, and theoretical the subject, the higher it is placed in the hierarchy.

***The First Order***—the useful arts and applied sciences, which include technical training, engineering, administration, arts and crafts, agriculture, mining, applied chemistry, statistics, commerce, and finance.

***The Second Order***—the practical sciences: medicine, psychiatry, law, economics, politics, and education.

***The Third Order***—the speculative sciences and fine arts, described as disinterested knowledge of nature and man and achievements of culture that liberate the mind by truth or beauty. It includes mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, biology, anthropology, psychology, prehistory, archeology, history, ancient and modern literature, languages, philosophy, music, and fine arts.

***The Fourth Order***—the highest rung, containing universal subjects that are repositories of wisdom. It includes metaphysics and epistemology; ethical, social, and political philosophy; and the history of religions.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast, Dewey does not believe that certain subjects and their essential inner structure have the innate power to make us think. Dewey contends that any subject, indeed any activity, can stimulate thought by functioning instrumentally as a means of inquiry and problem solving. He also argues against elevating abstract and theoretical subjects over the concrete, practical, and applied. That kind of curricular elevation, used by Maritain, isolates intellectual activity from the ordinary affairs of life and separates logic from the specific circumstances of everyday events.<sup>15</sup>

Dewey rejects Maritain's reliance on subject matter that has already been defined and classified before it is presented to students. In such instances, method is reduced to transmitting bodies of knowledge, often information, for absorption by learners' minds. Maritain assumes that the mind attains logic by conforming to such an externally imposed subject matter. The curriculum, so organized, is arranged in a series according to the subject's logic or chronology. When that happens, the subject matter rather than student needs, attitudes, and dispositions becomes the major factor in education. Dewey's concept of curriculum integrates both the scientific method's experimental processes and the group's collaborative educational role. Unlike the conventional curriculum organized around skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic and academic subjects such as history, mathematics, and chemistry, Dewey structured the school's program around three broad, focusing sets of activities: making and doing, history and geography, and science. It should be noted that the scientific method, likewise broadly conceived as the complete act of thought, is used throughout these sets of activities.

Making and doing refers to children's activities in their first years of school. Those activities lead children from their immediate families and homes into the larger society. At school, children might sweep the floor, water plants, set the table for lunch, and go on shopping trips. The familiar home and family activities flow into school activities without break-

ing the children's ongoing experiences. The stage of making and doing is followed by history and geography. Such areas of inquiry are taught not as conventional academic subjects; rather, they are designed to expand children's perspective into time and space. Children begin where they are and enlarge their sense of time to include historical events and enlarge their space by gradually entering into areas that are larger than and more distant from home and neighborhood. The third stage of curriculum, "science," is broadly construed to mean investigating the various subject-matter disciplines, not isolated from one another but used to solve problems. By having students solve problems using the scientific method and group processes, Dewey believes they gain a sense of reflective inquiry and practical intelligence.

In contrasting Maritain and Dewey's concepts of curriculum, two important differences are their views of preparation and science. Maritain sees a student's progress through the curriculum as a series of preparatory stages. Though each stage has its own powers, it is only one step on a long search for truth and wisdom. Dewey challenges the doctrine of preparation. For him, doing what is needed to solve immediate problems arising in experience provides the intellectual skill and method needed for the future. Maritain sees the physical sciences as liberal arts rather than applied technical studies. They should be connected with the history of civilization to build a sense of intellectual and cultural unity. They provide a vision of the universe and an understanding of scientific truth and a sense of sacred; they are an objective source of truth. Dewey sees science, in contrast, in instrumental terms: as the intelligent way of solving problems. He defines scientific induction as "all the processes by which the observing and amassing of data are regulated with a view to facilitating the formation of explanatory conceptions and theories."<sup>16</sup> For him, scientific knowledge developed from the problems of life and the occupations should solve these problems. Anatomy and physiology grew out of the practical concerns of keeping healthy, geometry out of the need to measure land, and so forth. Although informed by the bodies of scientific knowledge accumulated by experts, Dewey's scientific method is a broadly conceived procedure of scientific intelligence that is applicable to human affairs.

### **A Personal Conclusion**

In coming to a conclusion, it became clear to me that Jacques Maritain and John Dewey are polar opposites on philosophical orientation, human nature, the learner, curriculum, and methods of instruction. Although such diametrically opposed philosophies provide different ways of viewing educational ideas and practices, it struck me that I was left in an either-or situation: I had to accept one and reject the other.



Synthesis or integration seemed impossible. I then thought of Dewey's admonition in *Experience and Education* against becoming trapped in dichotomous, either-or situations. Though abandoning hope for a synthesis, I thought about what I might take from each philosopher. Though the result would not be consistent, it would be interestingly eclectic.

What I gained from Maritain was a renewed emphasis on the universal dignity of human beings that makes it possible to value humanness regardless of time, place, and circumstance. In thinking about the violence that has been inflicted on people because of their race, gender, and ethnicity, I realized that differences need to yield to a higher concept of the dignity of the human being. From Maritain I also renewed my commitment to liberal education, to the liberal arts and sciences as a repository of the best thinking of human beings. Although I gained these renewed sources of inspiration from rereading Maritain, I also came away with several reservations. I found his concept of childhood and adolescence built on scholastic ideas and out of touch with developments in psychology and sociology. I found his almost exclusive emphasis on content to the detriment of method a partial rather than complete educational theory.

Then I turned to Dewey. I found his discussion of the complete act of thought, or problem solving according to the scientific method, an eminently useful method that transforms learning into an active process of intelligence. I found his emphasis on the educational possibilities of the group a needed remedy for a society divided by special interests. I found that Dewey has a resonance particularly useful for critical thinking, process learning, interdisciplinary studies, and collaborative learning. Although I value his emphasis on instrumental thinking, especially in science and the social studies, I found that there are also other modes of thought not covered by the empirical mode of involvement in a problematic situation. I found that along with instrumental thinking, there are times when we can be speculative, poetical, or contemplative. As I end this essay, I find meaning and value in two very different philosophies of education. So my conclusion, rather than an ending, is more an end-in-view to further reading, discussion, examination, and searching.

## Notes

1. Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 73.

2. For perennialist sources, see Mortimer J. Adler, *The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1982); William Bennett, *The De-Valuing of America: The Fight for Our Culture and Our Children* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); and Robert Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936).

3. Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 70–72.
4. John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1960).
5. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1964).
6. Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 117.
7. *Ibid.*, 7.
8. *Ibid.*, 10.
9. *Ibid.*, 42–45.
10. John Dewey, *How We Think* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1997), 31–33.
11. John Dewey, "The Analysis of the Complete Act of Thought," in John Dewey, *The Middle Works, 1899–1924*, vol. 6: 1910–1911, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, 234–241 (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978).
12. Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 12–13.
13. For Dewey's Laboratory School, see Arthur G. Wirth, *John Dewey as Educator: His Design for Working in Education (1894–1904)* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966); and Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893–1958* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).
14. Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 66–78.
15. Dewey, *How We Think*, 50–51.
16. *Ibid.*, 94.

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